

Why are we not moving forward? It is because of obstruction by the Republicans in the Senate.

Under the adept leadership of Chairman MENENDEZ, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee is expected to report out at least 31 State Department nominees this week. Many of those nominations were made months ago and returned to the President at the end of the first session of the 113th Congress. Why were they returned? Because of obstruction of the Republicans.

It is incumbent upon the Senate to promptly consider all nominees, and in particular the vital nominees who will protect our national security and our role as a world leader. Unfortunately, Republicans have made it difficult and time consuming to confirm any nominee no matter how essential or how noncontroversial. If the Senate can't even fill its constitutional duties, how can we hope to engage in a robust amendment process?

We waste so much time trying to get simple nominations done. They complain about not having amendments. In this last work period, Mr. President, we spent weeks eating up time that meant nothing to anyone.

The same Republicans who wasted months of the Senate's time last year are now bitterly complaining that the Senate does not spend enough time considering amendments. Every hour Republicans force us to spend watching the clock, waiting to confirm nominees, to vote procedural motions before even beginning debate on legislation, is an hour we could have spent debating and voting on amendments.

We cannot have the extension of emergency unemployment insurance be bogged down by a raft of political amendments. Republicans are so obsessed with taking pot shots at the Affordable Care Act and staging political stunt votes that they are willing to derail a bill that will help 1.4 million out-of-work Americans. We can't allow that. It is unfair.

Still, the complaints of the minority have not fallen on deaf ears.

First my Republican colleague said they would not vote for an extension of unemployment benefits unless it was fully offset. I compromised. It is fully paid for in the bill before this body.

Next my Republican colleagues said they would not vote for this legislation unless it enacted real reforms for the unemployment insurance program. I agreed. That is in the bill before the body.

Now many of my Republican colleagues say they will turn their backs on Americans who have been out of work for months and months unless they have an opportunity to vote on amendments to this bill. Although I wonder what Republicans will demand next, I am willing to do what it takes to protect middle-class workers struggling to find jobs. So reasonable amendments, a reasonable number, relevant amendments, of course we would

be happy to take a look at that. I would be happy to do that. We have Tuesday caucuses every week. I will go over this with my caucus in some detail. But my Republican colleagues can't take yes for an answer. If they insist on swamping this important measure with extraneous political amendments, it will be clear they never wanted to extend unemployment in the first place.

If Republicans are serious about offering relevant amendments to strengthen and improve this bill, I am willing to sit down and talk about it. I am willing to allow votes on these amendments. However, I am not going to allow this legislation to be bogged down, as I have indicated, by meaningless votes or derailed by another doomed crusade to strip millions of Americans of the affordable care they have now. And once Republicans get the amendment votes they want, I hope they will give 1.4 million out-of-work Americans the vote they want and need.

My Republican colleagues should remember that a final vote on this legislation—a vote for middle-class men and women who desperately want to work and desperately need help—is the only vote that really matters.

#### RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican leader is recognized.

#### UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, my friend the majority leader is talking about the crush of nominations. Of course, the reason we have a crush of nominations is because of the decision of the majority to break the rules of the Senate to change the rules of the Senate last year, which produced the inevitable, entirely predictable consequence of sending an enormous number of nominations back down to the administration at the end of the session.

So the decision of the majority to run roughshod over the minority has a lot of consequences, one of which is pretty clear already: that it didn't streamline the nomination process as it was sold to the minority to do. It only made it more difficult.

On another matter, I would like to say a word about unemployment insurance.

The reason for the holdup should be pretty obvious at this point. Republicans have a lot of good ideas on how to pay for this extension. We also have a lot of proposals for getting at the root of the problem, proposals that would make it easier for folks who are struggling in this economy to actually find stable and fulfilling work or get retrained so they can find good jobs. That is a goal on which I expect we could all agree.

Unfortunately, up until the weekend the majority leader wasn't terribly in-

terested in any of these ideas. He only seemed to want to extend the program without really paying for it, without doing much of anything to help private sector job creation, and without creating opportunities for targeted training that would help folks who are currently receiving unemployment assistance actually find a job.

So I think this is unfortunate. There is clearly no shortage of creative, constructive proposals out there which speak to the underlying problems, which speak to the urgent need to create more stable, good-paying jobs, and which make sure we don't increase our already out-of-control Federal debt. Some of these ideas actually come from Democrats. The Presiding Officer's senior Senator from Connecticut has an idea to create a program that subsidizes employment for low-income Americans so they aren't stuck in neutral while they search for permanent work. This is an idea which actually deserves debate and a vote.

As I have indicated in recent days, the majority leader should give other Senators more of a say in what we do around here, including members of his own conference. So hopefully his comments a few moments ago and over the weekend are a sign that we may be able to work this out in a way that the Senate can function the way it used to, which was that Members were able to actually offer amendments and get votes before we moved to final passage on important legislation.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

#### RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

#### EMERGENCY UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION EXTENSION ACT

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of S. 1845, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 1845) to provide for the extension of certain unemployment benefits, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Reid (for Reed) amendment No. 2631, relating to extension and modification of emergency unemployment compensation program.

Reid amendment No. 2632 (to amendment No. 2631), to change the enactment date.

Reid motion to commit the bill to the Committee on Finance, with instructions, Reid amendment No. 2633, to change the enactment date.

Reid amendment No. 2634 (to (the instructions) amendment No. 2633) of a perfecting nature.

Reid amendment No. 2635 (to amendment No. 2634), of a perfecting nature.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

#### RESTORING DELIBERATION

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, Senator MCCONNELL has made a very important call to restore the Senate as